

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims reflects all claim amendments and replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Material to be inserted is in **bold and underline**, and material to be deleted is in ~~strikeout~~ or (if the deletion is of five or fewer consecutive characters or would be difficult to see) in double brackets [[]]. All canceled claims are canceled without prejudice.

1. (Original) A method of securing an animal to a fixed object with a securing device, wherein a lead line is coupled to the animal, and wherein the securing device includes a frame and a retaining member coupled to the frame and is mounted to the object, the method comprising:

inserting a segment of the lead line through the frame;

extending the segment of the lead line around the retaining member; and

pulling the lead line to bring the lead line into contact with the retaining member to thereby frictionally interlace the lead line with the frame and the retaining member such that a panicked animal can pull a length of lead line through the securing device.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein inserting a segment of the lead line through the frame includes forming a loop of lead line to insert through the frame and extend around the retaining member.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the retaining member is pivotally coupled to the frame, and wherein pulling the lead line to bring the lead line into contact with the retaining member includes pulling the lead line such that a free end of the retaining member is pulled into contact with the frame.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the securing device includes a mounting structure coupled to the frame, further comprising mounting the securing device to the object via the mounting structure before inserting the segment of the lead line through the frame.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein mounting the securing device to the object via the mounting structure includes fastening the securing device to the object with an eyebolt coupled to the mounting structure.

6. (Original) A method of securing an animal to a fixed object with a securing device, wherein a lead line is coupled to the animal, wherein the securing device includes a frame and a retaining member pivotally coupled to the frame such that the retaining member is pivotally movable between an open position and a closed position, and wherein the securing device is mounted to the object, the method comprising:

inserting a segment of the lead line through the frame;

extending the segment of the lead line around the retaining member; and

pulling the lead line to bring the lead line into contact with the retaining member and to move the retaining member into a closed position, wherein surfaces of the frame and retaining member that contact the lead line are substantially free of surface features that impede smooth sliding of the lead line across the surfaces.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the retaining member includes a bend configured to urge the lead line to a location spaced from the central region of the retention member when the lead line is interlaced through the frame and around the retention member.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein an end of the retaining member that is not pivotally attached to the frame is in contact with the frame when in the closed position.

10. (Currently Amended) A method of securing an animal to a fixed object with a securing device via a lead line, wherein the securing device is attached to the object and includes a frame coupled with the mounting structure, the frame including opposing sides **defining a closed perimeter with an opening therethrough**, and a retaining member disposed between the opposing sides of the frame, the method comprising interlacing the lead line through the frame and around the retaining member, and pulling the lead line to frictionally engage the lead line with the frame and the retaining member.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the retaining member is pivotally coupled to the frame, and wherein pulling the lead line to frictionally engage the lead line with the frame pulls an end of the retaining member not pivotally coupled to the frame into contact with the frame.

12. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the frame has a ring-like configuration, and wherein interlacing the lead line through the frame and around the retaining member includes inserting a segment of the lead line through the frame and extending the segment of the lead line around the retaining member.

13. (Original) A securing device configured to be coupled to an object to facilitate the securing of an animal to the object with a lead line, the device comprising:

a frame, the frame having generally rigid, spaced-apart side portions; and

a retaining member coupled with and extending from the frame between the side portions of the frame to allow the lead line to be interwoven between the side portions and the retaining member for frictional retention, wherein surfaces of the frame and retaining member that contact the lead line are substantially free of surface features that impede smooth sliding of the lead line across the surfaces.

14. (Currently Amended) The securing device of claim 13 [[15]], wherein the frame has a generally curvilinear cross-section that is free of corners.